



# Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Sidney Dillon Ripley Interviews, 1977-1993

by Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives  
Washington, D.C.  
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## Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.,<br><i>osiaref@si.edu</i> |
| Creator:    | Ripley, Sidney Dillon, 1913-2001 interviewee                                 |
| Title:      | Sidney Dillon Ripley Interviews  |
| Dates:      | 1977-1993  |
| Quantity:   | 48 audiotapes (reference copies).  |

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9591, Ripley, Sidney Dillon, 1913-2001 interviewee, Sidney Dillon Ripley Interviews

### Use Restriction

Restricted.

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## Historical Note

S. Dillon Ripley (1913-2001), ornithologist and eighth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, developed an interest in natural history in his youth. He received the B.A. from Harvard University in 1936 and the Ph.D. from Yale University in 1943. He served briefly as a curator of birds at the National Museum of Natural History before joining the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. From 1946 to 1963, he was on the faculty of Yale University and served as Director of their Peabody Museum from 1959 to 1963. In 1964, he was appointed Secretary of the Smithsonian. During his twenty year tenure as Secretary, he oversaw the development of the Anacostia Museum, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Festival of American Folklife, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of African Art, Renwick Gallery, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Associates, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and Smithsonian magazine. Ripley was also involved in numerous conservation organizations, including the Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos Islands, International Council for Bird Preservation, and International Union for the Conservation of Nature. His interests in international affairs also led him to play a role in the foundation of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

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## Introduction

The Smithsonian Institution Archives began its Oral History Program in 1973. The purpose of the program is to supplement the written documentation of the Archives record and manuscript collections with an Oral History Collection, focusing on the history of the Institution, research by its scholars, and contributions of its staff. Program staff conduct interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have

made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also interviews conducted by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

S. Dillon Ripley was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his role as an ornithologist and as the eighth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution from 1964 to 1984.

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## Descriptive Entry

Ripley was interviewed by Pamela M. Henson from 1977 to 1993 at his offices at the Smithsonian and at his home in Litchfield, Connecticut. These interviews cover his youth, early interests in natural history, education, career on the faculty at Yale, field work and expeditions, tenure as Secretary of the Smithsonian, involvement in international conservation efforts, and reminiscences of individuals, including Salim Ali, August Heckscher, Joseph H. Hirshhorn, G. Evelyn Hutchinson, and Ralph Rinzler. The collection consists of 38.5 hours of audiotape recording, circa 831 pages of transcript, and occupies 1.0 linear feet of shelf space. In total, this collection includes 35 original 5" reel-to-reel audiotapes, 18 original 7" reel-to-reel audiotapes, 18 preservation 7" reel-to-reel audiotapes, and 48 reference audiotape cassettes.

Restrictions: The recordings and transcripts of the S. Dillon Ripley Interviews cannot be used without the permission of his executor.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Art
- Conservation of natural resources
- Folklife studies
- Museum techniques
- Natural history
- Ornithology.

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Interviews
- Oral history

Names:

- Ali, Slim, 1896-1987.
- Anacostia Museum
- Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution)
- Charles Darwin Foundation
- Cooper-Hewitt Museum
- Festival of American Folklife

Harvard University  
Heckscher, August, 1913-1997  
Henson, Pamela M.  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden  
Hirshhorn, Joseph H.  
Hutchinson, G. Evelyn.  
International Council for Bird Preservation  
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources  
National Air and Space Museum (U.S.).  
National Museum of African Art (U.S.)  
Peabody Museum of Natural History  
Renwick Gallery  
Rinzler, Ralph.  
Ripley, Sidney Dillon, 1913-2001  
Sackler Gallery of Art.  
Smithsonian Associates.  
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.  
Smithsonian Magazine  
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
Yale University

## Container Listing

### Box 1

- Interview 1: 24 June 1977:
- Interview 2: 30 September 1977:
- Interview 3: 6 December 1977:
- Interview 4: 3 January 1978:
- Interview 5: 6 March 1978:
- Interview 6: 18 April 1978:
- Interview 7: 6 November 1978:
- Interview 8: 27 December 1978:
- Interview 9: 21 June 1979:
- Interview 10: 17 October 1979:
- Interview 11: 26 February 1980:
- Interview 12: 7 October 1980:
- Interview 13: 9 December 1980:
- Interview 14: 22 December 1980:
- Interview 15: 8 April 1981:
- Interview 16: 24 June 1981:
- Interview 17: 3 March 1982:
- Interview 18: 18 May 1982:
- Interview 19: 10 May 1983:
- Interview 20: 1 July 1983:

### Box 2

- Interview 21: 5 July 1983:
- Interview 22: 11 January 1984:
- Interview 23: 4 April 1984:
- Interview 24: 23 January 1985:
- Interview 25: 3 June 1985:

Interview 26: 14 March 1986:  
Interview 27: 22 May 1986:  
Interview 28: 24 September 1986:  
Interview 29: 16 October 1986:  
Interview 30: 19 March 1987:  
Interview 31: 23 December 1987:  
Interview 32: 11 January 1988:  
Interview 33: 20 May 1988:  
Interview 34: 7 July 1988:  
Interview 35: 8 July 1988:  
Interview 36: 8 January 1991:  
Interview 37: 1 April 1993:  
Interview 38: 17 May 1993:  
Interview 39: 20 May 1993:  
Interview 40: 25 May 1993:

Box 3

Audio Recordings of Interviews

Interview 1: 24 June 1977:  
Interview 2: 30 September 1977:  
Interview 3: 6 December 1977:  
Interview 4: 3 January 1978:  
Interview 5: 6 March 1978:  
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